

Maine Tourism Commission Natural Resource Committee

Purpose

The Maine Tourism Commission (MTC), in conjunction with the Maine Office of Tourism, recognizes the importance and value of Maine's natural resources both as a legacy to be protected for future generations and as an opportunity to be developed for purposes of expanding Maine's tourism opportunities.

In view of these multiple values, MTC has created a Natural Resources Committee that will research and report both to MTC and the Maine Legislature on a variety of issues as they relate to the relationship between the tourism industry and the use and protection of Maine's natural resources.

Specifically, the Committee will collect information regarding the current impact of tourist activities throughout the state on Maine's natural resources. It will develop strategies for ensuring the sustainable use of these resources by citizens and visitors who wish to take advantage of the available range of recreational opportunities. Finally, it will develop and recommend programs that will capitalize on the unique natural attributes of Maine's coastal and inland landscapes and ecosystems.

Structure

The MTC Natural Resources Committee is made up of members of the MTC representing landowners, professional guides, sportsmen, and camping organizations, as well as representatives of the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, the Department of Conservation, the Department of Agriculture, and the Maine State Planning Office. Also represented on the Committee are interests including, but not limited to, Maine Audubon, Natural Resources Council of Maine, University of Maine, the Department of Environmental Protection, the Department of Transportation, and US Fish and Wildlife Service.

Process

The Committee will commence by collecting information and concerns from regional tourism representatives. It will also collect information from state agency representatives on programs and issues relating to the use and protection of Maine's natural resources, both at the agency level and as regards current initiatives from the Legislature or the Governor's office.

Once the Committee has gathered sufficient information, it will begin to assess the current state of the relationship between Maine's tourism industry and the state's natural resources, as well as identify systems that will ensure the protection of those resources under current patterns of use.

Finally, the Committee will offer recommendations regarding ways in which the state could develop and expand natural resource-based, or ecotourism, opportunities.

In developing recommendations, the Committee will, among other things:

- Identify and monitor locations that are recognized for their nature-based tourism values and develop strategies for increasing nature-based tourism in Maine.
- Identify locations within the State that hold potential for significant nature based tourism value.
- Recommend marketing and promotion strategies, including marketing collateral and event development, that effectively incorporate nature-based tourism and reflect the available resources, resulting in the best return on investment.
- Propose infrastructure improvements designed to enhance rather than harm recognized resources. Such improvements might include, but not be limited to: wetland boardwalks, bird blinds, highway signs, wildlife and birding festivals.
- Research and examine case studies of successful nature-based tourism nationally and internationally for the purpose of determining what can be emulated in Maine.

The Committee recognizes the need to work with other state agencies and members of the public to define an approach for realizing these opportunities in the best possible manner while protecting the resource. It also recognizes the importance of coordinating and integrating these efforts, both public and private, to ensure consensus for action and efficiencies with limited time and money.

The Committee will report it's findings and recommendations for action to the Maine Tourism Commission who may then be required to report to the Legislature's Joint Committee on Business, Research and Economic Development during the second session of the 121 Legislature. The Committee will strive to utilize existing programs and initiatives, both public and private, to fulfill its recommendations for action.

Natural Resources Regional Forums

Date	Time	Location	Venue
September 10	10-12	South Portland	Amerisuites
September 11	10-12	Farmington	UMF Campus Union
September 11	3-5	South Paris	Oxford Hills HS
September 17	10-12	Rockport	Samoset Resort
September 17	3-5	Ellsworth	Holiday Inn
September 19	10-12	Millinocket	New England Outdoor Center
September 19	3-5	Rockwood	The Birches
September 23	10-12	Calais	Washington County Community College
September 23	3-5	Bangor	Holiday Inn Civic Center
September 24	10-12	St Agatha	Lakeview Restaurant
September 24	3-5	Mars Hill	Mars Hill Mountain
September 25	3-5	Bingham	North Country Rivers / Patrick's Restaurant

You are encouraged to register for the forum or forums you plan to attend.

To register send an email to Sharon.I.Thomas@maine.gov or call 207-624-7483 and tell us which forum or forums you plan to attend as well as your contact information